

THE TENNESSEAN

College Grove's Hatcher family Dairy expands

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The Hatcher Family Dairy has expanded its operations to include the Abe Hatcher Creamery, a 3,000-square-foot bottling facility.

The addition increases the farm's dairy processing to more than 1,600 gallons of milk per week, with a potential capacity of more than 2,000 gallons.

Previously, Hatcher Family Dairy milk was processed at Middle Tennessee State University, where it was limited to only 820 gallons per week.

Owners said the addition is an economic safeguard to keep Hatcher, a family farm since 1831, viable for generations to come.

"Investing in this bottling facility will allow us to keep the family farm regardless of pressure from urban development and today's economy," said Charles Hatcher. "This will increase sustainability of our farm and give consumers a fresh, quality product while decreasing the carbon foot print and food miles for all involved."

The current product line includes chocolate, skim, 2 percent, cream-line whole milk, buttermilk and cream.

"Our main obstacle is knowing how much of which product to bottle," said Jim Hatcher, plant manager of the new on-site facility.

"We listen to our customers and provide them the quality dairy product they desire."

Dan Strasser, director of market development for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, called the move "a perfect example of innovative farm expansion" during a time when Tennessee saw 22 family-owned dairy farms go out of business over the past year.

"Farmers across the United States are looking for ways to diversify and add value to farm goods," he said.

The new bottling facility is dedicated in memory of Abe Hatcher, Jim's father.

To learn more about the dairy, visit www.hatcherfamilydairy.com.